

9. A perfect heart

February 14, 2008

Today is Valentine Day. You husbands didn't know today is Valentine Day, it is going to be a long cold night outside of your home. I heard that it is going to be 31 degrees with possibility of rain. Do bundle up.

Wherever you go nowadays, you see red hearts and Cupid with his bow and arrow to inspire love. Much to Hallmarks' and American Greetings' surprise, true love has nothing to do with Cupid. It is nothing more than a silly Roman myth.

The true love and perfect heart to mankind can only be found in the heart of God. But much to our shame, none of the followers of God can be found with true love and perfect heart for the Lord or for others.

During the study of 1 Kings, I couldn't help myself to shake my head to the kings of Judah and Israel. I believe that the presence of God was more visible through visions and dreams and the voice of God was more audible through the prophets than now. But I don't think that we should envy them. Because we have the very presence of God in individual believer's heart and we have the voice of God in written format, the Bible.

From chapter 14 to 16, we find 10 kings from Judah and Israel, but I only find one good king and the rest of them were bad and horrible. Even though the one good king started well, he died in disobedience to the Lord.

In a bigger scope, the Northern Kingdom Israel had 20 kings in nine dynasties in about 250 years. None of those kings were good and godly. They all did evil in God's sight. The Southern Kingdom Judah had eight good kings out of 19 kings in the Davidic dynasty for 350 years. It is quite depressing to see all these evil kings and the ramifications of their evil behaviors.

A. JEROBOAM WITH A DEAD HEART

1 Kings 14:1-20 At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. 2 And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that I would be king over this people. 3 Also take with you ten loaves, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will become of the child." 4 And Jeroboam's wife did so; she arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of his age. 5 Now the Lord had said to Ahijah, "Here is the wife of Jeroboam, coming to ask you something about her son, for he is sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman." 6 And so it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps as she came through the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another person? For I have been sent to you with bad news. 7 Go, tell Jeroboam, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you ruler over My people Israel, 8 and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes; 9 but you have done more evil

than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back-- 10 therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free; I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone. 11 The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field; for the Lord has spoken!" 12 Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. 13 And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something good toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. 14 Moreover the Lord will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam; this is the day. What? Even now! 15 For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their wooden images, provoking the Lord to anger. 16 And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin." 17 Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed, and came to Tirzah. When she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. 18 And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet. 19 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, indeed they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 20 The period that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place.

During this time, prophets were often consulted on health matter. Jeroboam thought that if his wife disguised herself, the prophet whom he was inquiring would not know who she was. What kind of dumb prophet was he looking for?

When we are in sin, the only people we can fool are ourselves. Somehow we think that nobody knows our sins. The prophet Ahijah could see more in his blindness than Jeroboam and his wife could see with their gift of sight.

Before she arrived the Lord spoke to Ahijah the prophet. In the NT, this kind of gift is called 'the word of knowledge' in 1 Cor. 12:8. As the Lord see fit, He dispatches this gift to the people whom He trusts to utilize this information to the people. Sometimes it is down right scary to the ones who thought nobody knew.

Psalms 25:14 The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

There are three things we must notice in Ahijah's comments:

- 1) The prophet reminded Jeroboam of God's grace in the past.
- 2) Ahijah revealed Jeroboam's sins in the present.

He did more evil things than king Saul, David and Solomon combined.

- 3) The prophet told Jeroboam's wife that all the male of Jeroboam's family would be destroyed including their son in 15:29. Other than their son and Jeroboam, none of them would even have a decent burial.

What news to take back to home! Besides, she knew that as soon as she arrived home, her son would die. I don't know if she chose not to believe what the prophet said. But it happened as the Lord spoke through the prophet.

Jeroboam could have had a lasting dynasty, but he wasted the promise of God with his unbelief, idolatry and outright rejection of God. But he still didn't repent from his sins.

In light of the upcoming election, I am reminded of what Thomas Jefferson said in 1781, "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever...." I believe that God's justice against America is about to be unleashed as it did against Israel.

B. REHOBAM WITH AN APOSTATE HEART

1 Kings 14:21-31 And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king. He reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. 22 Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. 23 For they also built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. 24 And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 25 It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. 26 And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made. 27 Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard, who guarded the doorway of the king's house. 28 And whenever the king entered the house of the Lord, the guards carried them, then brought them back into the guard-room. 29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 30 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. 31 So Rehoboam rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. Then Abijam his son reigned in his place.

Rehoboam's mother was one of a thousand wives and concubines of Solomon and she was an Ammonite. In his later years Solomon embraced worshiping the pagan gods and the Lord Jehovah, there was no godly influence to Rehoboam.

For five years of his reign, Rehoboam caused the jealousy from the Lord by leading his people to worship the pagan idols. He chose to ignore what the Lord said in Exodus 20:5.

Exodus 20:5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God

Since Israel and the church which is the spiritual Israel are the bride of God, when we follow something or someone other than Him, He is jealous of us. Idolatry is spiritual adultery.

In addition to that, idolatry and immorality go together. They had high places which were idolatrous shrines, the erecting of sacred stones, shrine male and female prostitutes. The Jewish people were no longer a light to the Gentiles. Instead, the darkness of the Gentiles had invaded the land and was putting out the light.

Before we pass judgment on the king and people of Judah, perhaps we had better examine our own lives and churches. Surveys indicate that, when it comes to sexual morality, the "born-again" people in the churches don't live much differently than the unsaved people outside the church. The materialistic and humanistic concepts of the unsaved world have made their way into the church and are both tolerated and promoted. The Lord punished Rehoboam for his sins. How long will it be before the Lord punishes His church?

God decided that enough was enough and He sent the Egyptian king to destroy and ravage the kingdom. Shishak took away all the gold and silver from the house of God and 500 gold shields Solomon had made. This kind of thing never happened during the time of David and Solomon, but Rehoboam allowed his country to be vulnerable to an invasion in five short years.

In his left-over pride, Rehoboam made 500 bronze shields to replace the gold ones, so that he could still boast about his kingship.

We must remember that God does not allow His people to sin successfully.

C. ASA WITH A GODLY HEART IN THE BEGINNING

1 Kings 15:9-24 In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah. 10 And he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His grandmother's name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David. 12 And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. 13 Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron. 14 But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days. 15 He also brought into the house of the Lord the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which he himself had dedicated: silver and gold and utensils. 16 Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 17 And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 18 Then Asa took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the treasuries of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, 19 "Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you a present of silver and gold. Come and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me." 20 So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. He attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maachah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21 Now it happened, when Baasha heard it, that he stopped building Ramah, and remained in Tirzah. 22 Then King Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none was exempted. And they took away the stones and timber of

Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah. 23 The rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. 24 So Asa rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.

Asa dealt severely with state-sanctioned shrine prostitutes. He also removed his own grandmother who was the granddaughter of Absalom, from being the queen mother because she had an idolatrous shrine in a grove.

But when he had to fight against king Baash of Israel, the first thing he did was getting an alliance with the king of Syria. What happened to this godly king? Why did he depend on a pagan king rather than God who helped before? I can assume that his walk with God started to crumble as he became self-confident. Everyone was happy with this result of the treaty except the Lord.

Asa shows us the tragedy of a man who ruled well and sought the Lord for many years, yet failed in a significant challenge of his faith and then refused to hear God's correction. Age and time do not necessarily make us better. They only do if we continue to follow God in faith.

Finishing well is more important than starting well. The Bible is filled with the people who started with a great loud bang, but ended horribly. We just learned about one tonight. At the same time, we also know many who finished well.

1 Corinthians 9:24 "Remember that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize. You also must run in such a way that you will win."

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

There is no hidden secret or formula to finish well. The Lord continuously tells us the simple truth. Keeping our eyes on the One at the finishing line and keeping the same perfect heart as He does.

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) We must remember that God does not allow His people to sin successfully.

2) Age and time do not necessarily make us better. They only do if we continue to follow God in faith.

3) Finishing well is more important than starting well.